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DTG: 01/1440ZRELEASED BY: ReTOR: 01/1510Z

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How It Looks to an Old China Hand

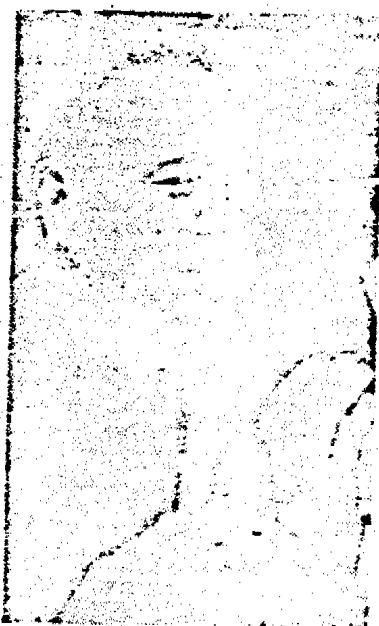
As President Ford prepared to go to Peking, John Stewart Service, who was once hounded out of the State Department for having accurately foreseen the fall of Chiang Kai-shek, was interviewed by staff members of this page. He visited China for three months last spring.

Is there likely to be a role for foreign policy as an issue as China approaches its transition?

I don't think that there's any real debate about foreign policy now. As far as I can see from talking to people in China, everyone is agreed that the Soviet Union is the principal enemy, the principal contradiction, the real bugaboo that everyone's worried about. This is not a personal thing. Mao's dying, or Chou En-lai's dying, is not going to change that. There was an issue of course about foreign policy in the extent to which they have sort of opened up to the United States. But I think that's been pretty well settled. I don't think that that's going to crop up again. Of course we would perhaps play a constructive role in this whole situation in China if we were a little more yielding on Taiwan.

Could you give us a prognosis for future relations between Taiwan and the Mainland, and possibly what their scenario is for reintegrating them?

Well, they won't talk about their scenario, of course, so you just have to sort of guess from little threads. I think they expect it's going to take a long time. They certainly



Deputy Premier Teng Hsiao-ping

don't want to have to go to war with Taiwan. . . . They anticipate that if they could persuade the United States to break relations with Taiwan—they want us to follow the Japan formula—that Taiwan will become isolated. Taiwan is fairly vulnerable to economic pressure. . . .

Would you suggest that American policy be designed to force Taiwan into China?

No. I don't think we should force it. Our policy should be hands off. It's not hands off when we recognize Taiwan as the Republic of China and have a defense treaty with them. Therefore, all I'm saying is normalize relations, recognize China as China, and then

which we're both concerned, the Far East. I'm not sure that necessarily they'd become easy to deal with if we had good relations with them, because in some areas they just won't yield, you know, on principle. They'll go on backing North Korea, and we're not going to get a settlement in Korea until we can work out some settlement in conjunction with China.

If the United States were to lean on China to restrain North Korea, and the United States were to withdraw from South Korea, could or would China want to help in achieving that?

This is really crystal-balling. It's very hard to get any Chinese to talk about this problem except . . . "We have no Chinese forces, and there should be no American forces," and that's all. It was obvious when Kim Il Sung visited Peking in the spring that the Chinese were a little nervous about him and were really doing their best to get that word "peaceful reunification," which kept coming up all the time in the papers and articles. I think Kim Il Sung makes them a little nervous. Also, the Russian element's in there, and my impression was that the last thing they wanted was another Korean War. Whether or not they'd be willing to sort of lean on Kim Il Sung depends partly on what we do about other things. If the Taiwan situation is settled, if their relations with the United States seem to have been productive and worthwhile, then you might have some sort of willingness. . . . But that's very much an outsider's view.

What's the Chinese role going to be in the next few years in Southeast Asia and Laos and Cambodia and Vietnam? How active are they going to be in assistance?

Well, I think pretty active in terms of Laos and Cambodia. They're going to be very concerned if they feel the Russians are getting a foothold in Vietnam. This would really get their backs up if the Russians established any bases, or a facility in Cam Ranh Bay or anything like that. . . . The whole Cambodian business has sort of changed since I left town. Apparently Sihanouk didn't get much of a reception down in Cambodia, so he's back, and I don't know what this does to the Chinese influence in Cambodia, because they were really counting on their long nurturing of Sihanouk. I think, to solidify their relationship to Cambodia, Sihanouk must be turning into a headache now. I see they've turned him out of the old French embassy that he used to live in for a long time. . . . Apparently his usefulness has diminished.

Why are the leaders so convinced that the dispute with the Soviet Union is inextinguishable?

There's been a split in the party, and they regard the Soviet party as having become revisionist, creating a new elite. So Russia has become the horrible example of what policies China should not follow. This of course is regarded in a dim light by Russia as a sort of heresy, and the break you might say was formalized in a way by the Brezhnev Doctrine which was announced in Czechoslovakia.

of a settlement on the border, but the issues along the border are not very great.

What about the State Department now? Do you think diverse and intelligent viewpoints about China are having a hearing?

... I'm a little skeptical about it myself. I think it's rather hard to penetrate the higher top reaches there. . . . But I don't know enough of the China people in the State Department to know what their thinking is. My feeling is that some of them would like to move a little faster on Taiwan. I suppose the issue at the top is first of all a political one. The Ford administration has been worried about the right wing, so they don't want to lay themselves open to another renewal of China Lobby type criticism. But also I think that the Secretary of State probably regards action on Taiwan as a card to be played. The Chinese don't look at it that way. But you see we don't get any progress on things like most-favored-nation treatment or settlement of the frozen assets, and I think they want the Chinese to make a fuss about this, because if they argue strongly, unfreeze the assets and claims, then we have something to bargain with. But the Chinese say, "Look, you know, there's no reason why we should make a fuss about this. Your people are going to benefit more than our people."

What are we losing from this kind of policy?

It's pretty hard to come up with anything in any solid, concrete terms, immediately. In the longer run, I think, there would be some advantages in having better relations with China. And I think that we're prolonging a sort of dangerous situation in the Taiwan independence situation that can be a problem in the future. If the Russians for instance establish relations with Taiwan, or Taiwan develops its own atomic bomb, which they certainly are capable of doing with all the power plants we're building for them, we could